

THE new head of the Foreign Office, Sir Frederick Hoyer Millar, has in high degree those qualities of endurance and equanimity which are more than ever necessary in the conduct of foreign affairs.

Changed, indeed, is the picture of diplomatic life. When I was very small I often dreamed of becoming Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Pindar would lie open on my enormous desk; when I drove back from luncheon at a quarter to four, hats would be raised in St. James's Park and the crowd would call out my name; and in the evening I would smilingly withhold the secrets of the day from beautiful women who would have got out their best parures in my honour.

But when I look at Mr. Selwyn Lloyd's timetable I'm glad to be down where I am.

Realities

On Monday afternoon, for instance, he left his hotel in New York after two weeks in that gruelling city. Flying through the night, he arrived at London Airport at eleven a.m. on Tuesday, went straight to the Cabinet, left for Paris after luncheon, took part in discussions till after two a.m. on Wednesday, was back in London after breakfast, put in a day at the office and dined with (and addressed) the Junior Carlton Club.

We all love the Young Tories, I daresay, but I really wonder if this kind of schedule is in the country's best interests. All Ministers overwork, of course, in modern conditions. But there comes a point beyond which more is endangered than the health of the Minister in question.

Plain Speaker

MADAME LOTTE LEHMANN's visit to London was her first since 1937. The

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manners-of-our liftmen (a sure guide to the morale of any great city) remained, she told me, gratifyingly perfect. English puddings, too, she claimed to prefer even to those in Vienna.

This was not flattery, for no one is more forthright than Madame Lehmann. "This is great trash, and not worth discussing!" was her answer to an inquiry about the novel which she published before the war, and where music is concerned, the greatest of all Marshalls has a Marshal's directness and cannot, alas, be quoted.

But I should like to be present at Santa Barbara, in California, when she steers her pupils through the problems of interpreting the great operatic roles. It is characteristic of her that what gives her most pleasure is not to re-do the roles which she did better than anyone in history, but to study those (Melsand, for instance) in which she never appeared.

A Good Beginning

THE prime mover in the exchanges that took Dr. Enid Starkie to Moscow and Professor Olga Akhmanova to Oxford (her impressions of her visit appear on Page 14) was that tireless negotiator, Sir Robert Mayer.

Himself a keen traveller, Sir Robert was able, as Treasurer of the World University Service, to give effect to a project very close to his heart. He tells me, too, that the U.S. has followed up this initial exchange with an invitation to her Rector of Moscow to send forty students to Oxford next spring.

The New Joan

NOTHING has been seen in this country of the professional activity of Madame Ulanova's husband, Mr. Vadim Rindin, who is styled as the

Bolshoi's "principal scenic designer." Other hands (Volkov, Versalade and, mysteriously, "Professor P. Williams") are responsible for the mammoth constructions which appear nightly humped to and fro across the Covent Garden stage.

I hear, however, that Madame Ulanova's next new role will be in a ballet on the subject of Joan of Arc and that, for this, Mr. Rindin is to design the scenery and costumes. It will be given not at the Bolshoi, but at a smaller and more experimental theatre in Moscow.

Tickets will be available, if

at all, from Intourist, please: not from me.

Invisible Supporter

ONE of the great invisible supporters of modern English literature is "Holiday" magazine, the American monthly which picks up some of our best writers, sends them to the places they've always dreamed of, and pays them handsomely for doing it.

Mr. Harry Slons, one of "Holiday's" senior editors, was in London last week. "We've all dreamed of working with the best writers in the world," he said, "and here I am,

doing it." His magazine has helped writers like V. S. Pritchett, Joyce Cary and William Sanson to do work for which they would never, otherwise, have found an opportunity; and that stay-at-home, too, can play a part is shown by one of his favourite pieces—Eric Ambler's "Timid Man's Guide to Criminal London."

"Holiday's" policy is resolutely anti-digest ("There's far too much truncated journalism about nowadays"), and the editor-in-chief, Mr. Ted Patrick, recently printed every one of William Faulkner's 12,000 words on "The State of Mississippi." Among the younger English writers whom Mr. Slons

proposes to let loose on his very large English public are John Prebble, Eric Newby and Richard Cahler.

The Public Taste

NO one is responsible for recording changes in public taste, from simple things like the arrival of blue jeans, Espresso coffee, fly screens on the bonnets of motor-cars (fast vanishing) and Canasta, to the Festival-of-Britainisation of our furniture and hardware. It

might make an amusing illustrated annual for a publisher. This thought came to me when I heard from Washington that the most popular picture in the National Gallery of Arts, for years a Renoir, is now Salvador Dali's "Last Supper."

The Gallery is selling reproductions of this strange painting at the rate of about 9,000 prints and postcards a month.

Constant Loves

I decided to inquire into the postcard stakes at the National Gallery and the Tate, expecting surprises.

I got them. At the National Gallery, Muriel's "Peasant Boy" has easily led the field for years, and even as I made my inquiry, two old ladies came up to ask for "a picture of that little boy. You know the one."

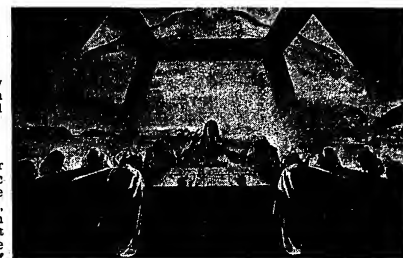
Runners-up were all hoary favourites like Leonardo's "Virgin of the Rocks," Constable's "Hay Wain," and Hobbema's "The Avenue."

At the Tate the story was much the same. Braque, Matisse and Picasso are all available but, with endearing constancy, the public buys Renoir's "La première sortie" with the pre-Raphaelite Hughes's "April Love" in second place.

Money to Burn

THERE'S a fortune for anyone who can invent a really new firework.

The speaker was Mr. Roy Brock, who was taking me on a pre-November the Fifth tour of his factory. A firework-maker guards his next year's models with a jealousy that



Salvador Dali's "The Last Supper."



Muriel's "Peasant Boy."



Hughes's "April Love."

Bombs Away

Brock's were founded at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Mr. Brock himself has been making fireworks since his teens. His first work for the firm was to arrange the set-piece display for Bombay's peace celebrations in 1919, and now he is ramming home the gunpowder for the Gold Coast Independence celebrations.

The only fly in the firework-maker's cauldron is that by agreement with the Home Office, fireworks will be less noisy this year. Mr. Bill Thaxter, who has been making them for sixty-two years, told me that nothing he makes these days could equal the old sixpenny maroon.

Next year bangers will be made only of gunpowder. The thunder of Sonic Cannons and Atomisers will give way to the dainty sneeze of the squib, the Black-Jack and the Boy-scout Rouser.

would make a couturier seem ravenous for advance publicity, but a hint was dropped that by November of next year something really new in fireworks will be on sale.

Brock's are making four times as many fireworks as before the war, and yet, despite the credit squeeze and with only twelve shopping days